

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants thank Examiner Collins for discussing this application during the interview of January 14, 2005. Applicants have amended the pending claims in accordance with Examiner Collins' comments and suggestions during the interview. Claim 18-29 are presently pending.

In the pending Office Action, claims 18-23 and 26-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Goddard's '209 patent in view of Manuli '897 as applied to claim 22, and further in view of EP595742. Claim 25 was stated to contain allowable subject matter.

As discussed in the interview of January 14, 2005, the prior art of record does not teach or suggest that the reinforcing material has a width not substantially greater than necessary to resist loss of sealing engagement. Because all of the elements of the claimed invention are therefore not found in the references as combined, the Examiner has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness and the rejection of claims 18-24 and 26-29 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should be withdrawn.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 18-29 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed amendments to claims 18, 26, and 29 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Applicants also submit that the entry of this Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's

reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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